

Who's afraid of Oscar Wilde?

Let the palm reader at Krudttønden read your hand late on a London night in 1895, and you will feel like the hunted Oscar Wilde.

Anne Middelboe Christensen

A brooch with a big pearl and a gigantic scarab-ring and Mr. Wilde has arrived! Charm sprinkled like expensive perfume seems to linger in the air when the English speaking THAT-THEATRE COMPANY tackles the story about London's most shocking homosexual scandal from the 1890's, resurrected in this play about Oscar Wilde. He meets society palm reader, Mrs. Robinson shortly before his trial where he was brutally accused for his sexual conduct that ended in 2 years hard labour and exile.

In Extremis was written by English dramatist, Neil Bartlett in 2000, as the National Theatre's 100 - year commemoration of Oscar Wilde's death. British born actor, Ian Burns brings it home to Copenhagen where director, Claus Bue elegantly directs this meeting behind London's plush drapes with a thrilling intensity. Why doesn't Oscar flee when there's still time?

The performance re-enacts an incredible meeting in a small parlour with warm lighting, where Oscar Wilde wants his future predicted.

Ian Burns plays Oscar Wilde with great honesty and without any gay clichés. Here is a disillusioned man in his 40's with much life experience, however his love for his lover conquers all hate. Ian Burns especially shines when having to restrain, and mixed with his contemplative thoughts and his beautiful native English born voice he is absolutely stunning.

However, it's when he is opposite Annemette Andersen that his refinement is at it's best. She plays a modest palm reader against Burns' true man of passion and her American timbre gives her a raw street quality, which makes her a believable opportunistic palm reader. Annemette is Danish, but has trained in the US, where she now works in Los Angeles.

Cheekbones

What a power woman! She drills her blue eyes into Burns, but also into each and every audience member as if she could read every one just by looking at them. She performs with such self-assurance under her high cheekbones, and her humour plays a beautiful ping-pong with both Burns and his Wilde. "I need someone to talk to" says Oscar Wilde quietly.

The man who created some of the worlds most intelligent and famous quotes from the 1895 play, "The Importance of being Earnest", needs someone to talk to simply because open conversation about sexuality back the late 1800's wasn't possible. The question is, if this topic of conversation is now possible in Denmark? That-Theatre's intelligent meeting between Ian Burns and Annemette Andersen creates fireworks. Maybe she didn't tell him the whole truth about the court case...?

Photo: Mark Jones

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In Extremis. Play: Neil Bartlett.

Director: Claus Bue. Costume designer: Hanne Mørup.

That-Theatre at Krudttønden, Serridslevsvej, behind Republique by the park.

Monday-Friday at 8 pm, Saturday at 5 pm. Until November 21. 2009. www.that-theatre.com